

# Rockefeller Globalism

**Philanthropist,  
plutocrat and  
former banker  
David Rockefeller  
has been promoting  
his "one world"  
vision among global  
powerbrokers since  
the 1960s, while  
dismissing claims  
that he's part of a  
cabal out to control  
the planet.**

## Part 3

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### THE "PROUD INTERNATIONALIST": DAVID ROCKEFELLER (1915 – )

**M**ost analysis of the role of David Rockefeller in the New World Order is usually ridiculed by smug commentators in the "responsible" press as the stuff of fantasy. For these oracles, descriptions of Rockefeller as "one of the foremost partisans of world government under the UN" (Jasper), the "éminence grise of international power politics" (Wilkes) and "one of the most high profile, and most obvious, New World Order manipulators on the planet" (Icke)<sup>1</sup> are not to be taken seriously. Indeed, to contend that the billionaire ex-banker, philanthropist and founder of the Trilateral Commission could have any global designs is taken as a sign that one has fallen for the infantile ravings of the "black helicopter crowd". Perhaps, it is implied, only those afflicted by a peculiar mental malady could believe or contemplate such claims.

Back in 1996, for example, high-rating US national radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh openly mocked these beliefs in his so-called "Kook Test":

- *Do you believe that David Rockefeller, Henry Kissinger and other famous members of the New World Order provide daily instructions to agents of the FBI, CIA, BATF, and National Organization of Women?*
- *Do you believe that the feminist movement was the brainchild of David Rockefeller for the purpose of having men and women at war with each other on a daily basis so as to distract them from the real conspiracy of the CFR?*
- *If you have answered even one of these questions "yes", then you are a kook and have passed the test.*

David Rockefeller himself has often scoffed at such claims. In a letter to the *New York Times* in 1980, he took issue with the "nonsensical defamation" he claimed to have been subjected to over the years. "I never cease to be amazed by those few among us who spot a conspiracy under every rock, a cabal in every corner..." David wrote, lamenting that he was usually "singled out as the 'cabalist-in-chief'". Eighteen years later, David's mirth remained intact. "It's so absurd I can't help but, to some extent, find it amusing", he told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in 1998, commenting on conspiracy theories about himself and the Trilateral Commission.<sup>2</sup>

Yet curiously, David's key role in promoting global political and economic unity is not only explicitly recognised but is openly celebrated within the power-elite. According to one recent tribute, because of his "contributions to enterprise and humanity" David had become "one of the world's most respected citizens". The speaker, Thomas d'Aquino, President and CEO of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, addressing an elite gathering in 2002, had no qualms praising David's "impressible urge to promote international cooperation and understanding" and his "passions...for the promotion of international cooperation" and "inter-American cooperation".<sup>3</sup> Equally unrestrained was Harvard University President Neil Rudenstine, who venerated David in 1999 as an "informed, observant, experienced, modest, and generous citizen of the world, interested in the welfare of all".<sup>4</sup>

At celebrations for the 25th anniversary of the Trilateral Commission's US group in 1998, a roster of adoring Establishment heavyweights repeatedly toasted the "sense of vision" (Berthoin), "farsightedness and leadership" (Ogata), "great munificence" (Black) and "sense of obligation" (Kissinger) of their Honorary Chairman. The "first global history of mankind is about to start", claimed Georges Berthoin, a former European

Chairman of the Trilateral Commission, and it was all due to David Rockefeller, the "gentleman-pioneer of the trilateral world".<sup>5</sup> Similarly, at a book signing for David's new autobiography, *Memoirs*, held in late 2002 at the United Nations headquarters in New York, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan hailed the plutocrat's contribution to world order:

*I think without internationalists like you, the international system we have been trying to build, the international system we have today, wouldn't be here. So, thank you very much, David.*<sup>6</sup>

But we need not take their word for it. After years of denying and ridiculing such charges, David Rockefeller has finally put an end to the speculation, making the following admission in *Memoirs*:

*For more than a century, ideological extremists at either end of the political spectrum have seized upon well-publicized incidents...to attack the Rockefeller family for the inordinate influence they claim we wield over American political and economic institutions. Some even believe we are part of a secret cabal working against the best interests of the United States, characterizing my family and me as "internationalists" and of conspiring with others around the world to build a more integrated global political and economic structure—one world, if you will. If that's the charge, I stand guilty, and I am proud of it.*<sup>7</sup>

David Rockefeller's bold confession, finally given late in his life, is clearly momentous but it also warrants further scrutiny, for his account in *Memoirs* omits much important detail. Only by examining David's statements, articles and speeches over the past 40 years can the true extent of his vision of "a more integrated global political and economic structure" be understood. And such examination also reveals that David has not been an idle dreamer, but has used his position as arguably the most powerful and influential Rockefeller of the latter half of the 20th century to advocate a revamped version of the Wilson–Fosdick world order model.

### The Heir Apparent

One of the more common observations made by biographers of the Rockefeller family is that of all John D. Rockefeller, Jr's offspring, it is David, despite being the youngest, who has emerged as the true heir to the vast reservoir of political and economic power originally amassed by John D. Rockefeller, Sr. As Peter Collier and David Horowitz observe in their book, *The Rockefellers*, in contrast to his siblings it was David who "was the most serious, the one who was conscious of his birthright from the beginning".<sup>8</sup> Even Senior seemed to sense that his genes had finally re-emerged under David, and he doted on his youngest grandson with a degree of affection he had not given to his own son.

Coincidentally, David recalls in *Memoirs* that it was in 1937, at the funeral service for Senior (who died at the age of 97), that he learned not only that was he the deceased monopolist's "favorite" but that Senior had "always thought" David was "most like him[self]". Having received this confirmation of his status from

Senior's trusted valet of some 30 years, John Yordi, David admits to having been ecstatic: "I thought it would have been Nelson, but *I couldn't pretend I wasn't pleased*."<sup>9</sup> It is noteworthy that David starts *Memoirs* with this incident, as it is one of the few admissions to his true status.

Lacking Nelson's hunger for publicity and overt power, David's career path took a somewhat different course. Educated at Harvard, the London School of Economics (LSE) and the University of Chicago, David became the only one of Junior's children to have earned a PhD. The subject of his dissertation, essentially an attack on government regulation of business activity, was "Unused Resources and Economic Waste" (1940). Upon completion of his studies, and contemplating a career in politics, David returned to New York in 1940 to work as secretary to New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia. In mid-1941, tiring of local politics and seeking "administrative experience", David started work with a new government body, the Office of Defense, Health, and Welfare Services. This proved to be short-lived, though, and with the outbreak of the war David enlisted in the US Army, going on to serve as an intelligence officer in North Africa and France.

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Returning to the US in 1946, David went to work for the "family bank", Chase Manhattan. He started as a low-ranking officer, but, thanks to the Rockefeller family's controlling interest, he rapidly rose through the ranks and in 1969 became Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. David ran the bank until his retirement in 1981, but continued to play a role as Chairman of the bank's International Advisory Committee.

Although David later liked to boast that he was "the first member of the family since Grandfather who has had a regular job in a company and

has devoted a major part of his life to being in business", it was apparently "not an easy decision" as he still desired to work with government or in philanthropy, particularly on international affairs.<sup>10</sup> But, in truth, neither avenue has ever been closed to him.

### The Education of an Internationalist

David attributes much of his internationalist fervour to the influence of his parents, his overseas travelling experiences and his changed world outlook following World War II. He writes that it was his parents who first impressed on him "the importance of the world beyond the United States". His father, Junior, "was a staunch supporter of the League of Nations" and, through the Rockefeller Foundation, "one of the principal funders of health, education, and cultural endeavors around the world".<sup>11</sup> But there were other influences, including David's education at Harvard University and the University of Chicago during the 1930s, and his early membership of the Council on Foreign Relations from 1949 and the Bilderberg Group from 1954.

It was at Harvard, under the guidance of Professor Gottfried von Haberler (1901–1995), that David received more vigorous indoctrination into the benefits of free trade. Described by David as a "staunch supporter of free trade", Haberler would have given compelling guidance—for the Austrian professor was, according to one biographer, "one of the first economists to make a rigorous case for the superior productivity and universal benefits of 'free' or politically unrestricted international trade..." At the University of

Chicago, these views were reinforced when another free trade proponent, the economist Jacob Viner (1892–1970), tutored David. Lauded by David as an advocate of "unobstructed trade as a means of generating economic growth", Viner was one of the leading free trade theorists of his time. He was also an advocate of using international institutions to manage the world economy. Fittingly, David includes Haberler and Viner among those academics to whom he owes an "intellectual debt", hailing them as "truth seekers" whose example he has attempted to follow.<sup>12</sup>

David joined the Council on Foreign Relations in 1949, his surname ensuring election to its board of directors. David naturally understates the CFR's influence on his thinking, merely observing that he found it to be the "best place" for pursuing his "interest in global affairs". Tellingly, David admits his motivation for joining the CFR was his determination to "play a role" in the process of ensuring the US provided leadership in building "a new international architecture" following World War II. While David correctly identifies the wide range of views among the CFR's members, for him the Council's enduring value has been its role in devising schemes for world order that conform with his Wilsonian vision. For example, marking the CFR's 75th anniversary in 1997, David hailed the Council's role as America's "premier school for statesmen", observing that it was from the CFR's War and Peace Studies project that America's post-war plans for a "just and durable international system" had emerged, and from more recent CFR studies that "awareness of global economic interdependence gained particular prominence in national policy discussions".<sup>13</sup>

In 1954, David was selected by President Eisenhower to be one of the founding US members of the Bilderberg Group. The Bilderbergers have long been controversial, with many researchers attributing to the annual secret gathering a role in establishing the European Union and facilitating the planning of a world government.<sup>14</sup> David insists, naturally, that the "truth" is that Bilderberg is no more than an "intensely interesting discussion group" which does not reach a consensus. What Bilderberg discusses, David does not say, preferring to characterise the cabal as a unique networking opportunity. Bilderberg, David said in 1990, gave him "an opportunity...to become acquainted with some of the leaders of Europe and the United States on a very informal basis...one got to know them on a first-name basis".<sup>15</sup> Other Bilderbergers, however, such as former British politician Denis Healey, admit there is a Bilderberg consensus, with most Bilderbergers believing that "a single community throughout the world would be a good thing".<sup>16</sup> Such a consensus would have obviously reinforced David's globalist inclinations, making the Bilderbergs more than merely an unusually well-connected social rendezvous.

This is but a small sample of the influences on David's globalist outlook, but it also illustrates his reliance on the ideas of others. Despite his PhD, David is not quite the theoretical mastermind behind the New World Order that he appears to be. Instead, like most plutocrats intent on changing the world, he appropriates the

ideas of others, usually Establishment academics and technocrats, incorporating them into his own global vision when it suits his purposes. But, David admits, he has "never been particularly dogmatic" in his political or economic beliefs, preferring to support "effective people and...practical policies".<sup>17</sup> Thus, for David, ideas or protégés can be discarded once they are no longer useful to him or his ultimate goal of "a more integrated global political and economic structure".

### A Modern-Day Medici

David Rockefeller's globalist inclinations would be of little interest if not for his uniquely powerful position in the US political sphere. In attempting to describe David's power, academics and journalists have used many superlatives, and it is instructive that these descriptions are similar. David Rockefeller is "[t]he single most powerful private citizen in America today", observed Florida State University academic Thomas R. Dye in his 1976 book, *Who's Running America?* The journalist Bill Moyers, in his 1980 TV special, *The World of David Rockefeller*, described the plutocrat respectively as "the unelected if indisputable chairman of the American Establishment" and "one of the most powerful, influential and richest men in America", who "sits at the hub of a vast network of financiers, industrialists and politicians whose reach encircles the globe". And in 1998, NewsMax.com described David as "one of the world's most influential private figures".<sup>18</sup>

David has always rejected such assessments, insisting that his power is limited and that he has no real leverage with world leaders or government officials, merely good access to them. In an interview with *Forbes* magazine in 1972, for example, David downplayed the idea that he had any such power:

***I have no power in the sense that I can call anybody in the government and tell them what to do. Because of my position I'm more apt to get through on the telephone than somebody else, but what happens to what I suggest***

***depends on whether they feel this makes sense in terms of what they are already doing.***<sup>19</sup>

Dye disputes this, claiming that the real reason for David's elaborate denial is simple: with it already well known that he "exercises great power", the plutocrat has "no reason to try to impress anyone" by openly admitting it. In fact, David's position and behaviour are similar to that of the Medici banking family that unofficially ruled 15th-century Florence by subverting the elaborate electoral system through a combination of deception, corruption and violence. The Medicis were effectively the shadow government of Florence—a fact acknowledged in the Florentine expression, "the secret things of our town". That was because, as Tim Parks notes in the *New York Review of Books*, the Medici family leadership understood that "to hold power for any length of time, one must appear not to hold it".<sup>20</sup> Although not known for emulating their more controversial practices, David Rockefeller is like the Medicis, his shadowy yet powerful political role one of the "secret things" of Washington, DC.

**David Rockefeller is "the single most powerful private citizen in America today", observed Florida State University academic Thomas R. Dye in his 1976 book, *Who's Running America?***

David's preference for this behind-the-scenes political role stems from his profound distaste for normal democratic politics. Although clearly interested in power, David, after working for Mayor La Guardia, apparently found the idea of having to depend on the whims of the voting public unattractive. "The danger in that field," he later commented, "is that you spend all of your time running for office."<sup>21</sup> Unstated, of course, is the plutocrat's probable discomfort at the prospect of being publicly accountable in *any way* for his actions—something that would be an affront to the enormous power this Rockefeller saw as his due.

Instead, David found a surer route to power by fulfilling the family tradition of using philanthropy as a "bridge" between the private and public sectors. David typically presents his motives behind his philanthropy as benevolent, an embodiment of Junior's belief that "philanthropy was about being a good neighbor". "I have tried to emulate Father by contributing to a variety of not-for-profit organizations throughout my life," he writes in *Memoirs*.<sup>22</sup> But this is disingenuous, for David's actual motives for embracing philanthropy in fact have more in common with Andrew Carnegie's view that the wealthy have an exclusive right to shape society.

It has been in other forums, in little-noticed speeches to elite gatherings, that David's true intentions have been revealed. Like Carnegie, David considers an active political role by the rich to be a matter of duty rather than a mere whim, as he stated to one gathering that "the opportunities for possessing wealth carry with them *comparable responsibilities*".<sup>23</sup> In fact, he told the New York Economic Club in 1996, philanthropy performs a vital social function in which the rich and businessmen in general are able to realise their "*responsibility to society* beyond that of maximising profits for shareholders". Although "making profits must come first", as profits are "the most important instrument we have to promote the broader welfare of our society", David maintained that the captains of industry should style themselves as "business statesmen" and be "vocal and visible...speaking out on community, industry and national issues".<sup>24</sup>

This also includes active involvement in the non-profit area, supporting various organisations whether dealing with domestic or international issues. There is "nothing wrong with perpetuating one's name by endowing an organization or building", David told the Sid W. Richardson Foundation in 1985, but with government in retreat in many areas, "the private area must take up the slack".<sup>25</sup>

Unless the business class is actively involved in resolving "societal problems", he warned the New York Economic Club, the public may become "disenchanted with business" and "demand that government *resume its previous role* as the arbiter of our economic life".<sup>26</sup>

And thus David's real agenda becomes clear: the rich must govern, limiting the role of elected officials; but the multitude must be placated lest they clamour for the return of democracy, threatening the reign of the plutocrats.

## Emperor of the Establishment

But what is the source of David's power? It is not just his personal fortune, currently a meagre US\$2.5 billion and a pittance compared to the US\$30 billion or more of today's super-rich such as Bill Gates and Warren Buffet. One obvious source has been his executive positions at the Chase Manhattan Bank. But the primary basis, as Dye explains, is in David's enduring role as "director of the vast Rockefeller empire"; that is, his leadership of "the Rockefeller network of industrial, financial, political, civic, and cultural institutions".<sup>27</sup> At the centre of this network are the remnants of the vast fortune originally amassed by John D. Rockefeller, Sr, and then dispersed into an abundance of family trusts and philanthropies. This includes the Rockefeller Foundation (2001 market value of assets, US\$3.1 billion) and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) (2002 market value of assets, US\$670 million). As a former Vice-Chairman (1968–1980), Chairman (1980–1987) and now an Advisory Trustee of the RBF, David has always been at the hub of this network.

Outside of this hub is a plethora of public institutions including foundations, non-government organisations and various government advisory boards that David has been involved with, usually in a leading role. His myriad positions include: Honorary Chairman of Rockefeller University; Chairman Emeritus of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City; Chairman of the Americas Society; Director of the US-USSR Trade and Economic Council; Chairman of the New York Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Chairman of the US Advisory Committee on Reform of the International Monetary System; Honorary Chairman of the Japan Society; a director of International House; a trustee of the University of Chicago; a trustee of the John F. Kennedy Library; President of the Board of Overseas Study at Harvard; and now, an honorary jury member on the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation's International World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition.

This impressive range of institutions that David has been involved in also

includes a raft of policy-planning organisations devoted to international political and economic affairs. David's role in these organisations has never been marginal, and his positions include: Director, Chairman and Honorary Chairman of the **Council on Foreign Relations** (CFR); founder, North American Chairman and Honorary Chairman of the **Trilateral Commission**; a life member of the **Bilderberg Group**; Chairman and Director of the **Institute for International Economics** (IIE); founder, Chairman and Honorary Chairman of the **Council on the Americas**; and a trustee of the **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** (CEIP). He is also a co-founder of the **Dartmouth Conference**, the **International Executive Service Corps** and the **Global Philanthropists Circle**.

At a recent "book party" for the retiring plutocrat, former US Trade Representative Carla Hills celebrated David's pivotal role in maintaining this network:

**Instead, David found a surer route to power by fulfilling the family tradition of using philanthropy as a "bridge" between the private and public sectors.**

*Had [David Rockefeller] not been the founder, long-time chairman and benefactor and even often all of the above, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Council of the Americas, the Institute for International Economics, the Trilateral Commission, the White House Fellows Program, and I could name so many more, might not exist. And if they did, they might not assuredly be as effective as they are today.*<sup>28</sup>

True to his Medici-like preference for avoiding public scrutiny, David has rejected formal government appointments, including offers to be Secretary of the Treasury and of Defense, and numerous ambassadorial positions. In *Memoirs*, David cites "political considerations" and his devotion to Chase Manhattan as his reasons for declining these offers. David also believed, not without good reason, that through his Chase chairmanship he could "accomplish much that would benefit the United States as an 'ambassador without portfolio'". At the panel discussion on *Memoirs*, held in October 2002 at Johns Hopkins University, David elaborated further, noting that his position at Chase provided him with "a rather unique opportunity to play a quiet but hopefully useful role". And on the *Charlie Rose Show*, David added that he could achieve much more outside of government as he was not limited to four-year terms, thus enabling him to do "a lot of interesting things" over decades.<sup>29</sup>

As a self-appointed "ambassador without portfolio", for example, David has used his unique access to visit countless

heads of state, ostensibly on business for Chase or as part of CFR delegations but often as an unofficial emissary for Washington. David has had private meetings with hundreds of national leaders—a privilege usually only afforded to senior officials or other heads of state. The list includes Nikita Khrushchev, Alexi Kosygin, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Deng Xiaoping, Saddam Hussein, Fidel Castro, Zhou Enlai and the Shah of Iran. The product of these associations is a network of power and influence, with David at its centre—ultimately embodied in his massive electronic Rolodex, located in his office in the Rockefeller Center, reputed to contain 150,000 names.<sup>30</sup>

Continued next issue...

#### Author's Note:

In Part Four we will continue to examine David Rockefeller's internationalist vision, focusing on his most controversial creation: the Trilateral Commission.

#### About the Author:

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